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Front Cover—

VINCENT VAN GOGH (1853-1890)—*Chestnut Trees in Flower*
Painted in May, 1890. Canvas 28¼ by 23¼ inches.
(Lent by Mr. and Mrs. B. G. De Sylva)

TOWARD CULTURAL MATURITY IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

An address by James H. Breasted Jr., Director of the Museum, to the Friends of the Colleges at Claremont. Given at the California Club, Los Angeles, on March 30, 1948.

Mr. Craig, it is indeed most gracious and public-spirited of the Friends of the Colleges at Claremont to hold a dinner of this character. Dr. Valentiner and I wish to express our gratitude to the Friends for inviting us, and for their kindness in including here this evening some of our colleagues, the directors of other museums in Southern California. We are both going to try to treat rather large subjects in a brief time.

You as a group are very active in the cultural development of no fewer than four colleges. We are working to have the only publicly supported large local museum play a forward part in the cultural life of this region. Perhaps, therefore, it would not be improper for me to say something about CULTURAL MATURITY IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.

Some years ago, on one of my regular Sunday evening visits to the home of Dean Wicks at Princeton, I brought the news of having accepted an academic appointment in Southern California. The now retired Dean of the Princeton University Chapel congratulated me, and immediately added a never forgotten admonition about some of the people whom I might meet in this beguiling "island in the land." In the intervening years, and on many mornings as I drive past the State Unemployment Office on the way to the Museum, and see the long line of unfortunates from the ends of the earth, I have sometimes wondered whether Dean Wicks' remark were not reasonably true. But when I have found some of those same underprivileged men and women at the Los Angeles County Museum quietly enjoying a Rembrandt, examining prehistoric animals, or studying historical documents of California, I have also asked myself whether there is any better way known to bring such persons to cultural maturity, each up to the limit of his capacity.

But what is cultural maturity? Maturity is hard to define, perhaps because it is rare. Yet culture of a sort is something of which all of us are a part. One of the best definitions of it was written on the flyleaf of my copy of *The Study of Man* by the author himself, the anthropologist Ralph Linton, who said: "Culture is the symphony; society is the orchestra, and the individual is a musician playing his prescribed part, but always playing it a little off key." Who is the composer of the symphony, parts of which all of us are playing? Here the simile breaks down, for the symphonic structure of culture is but the present form of a growth which began when man first became an implement-making creature at the start of the Old Stone Age. In that sense, all creative humans who add something to the score of culture are both composers and players.

At what stage does cultural maturity begin? Professor E. R. Hughes of Oxford University has written that: "The first two rungs of the ladder to a higher civilization are the rungs of self-consciousness in the individual, and of the conscious use of reason." To this he added: ". . . if a race gets things out of perspective and devotes its creative energies too much to art or too much to science, if it relies too much on intuition or too much on reason, it is not in a state for moving on to a higher stage of civilization." Cultural maturity begins with those two rungs. From there it rises to embody an awareness of our contemporary failings, and of their relation not only to failings of other

nations of our time, but to those of other cultures in earlier ages. In its ability to be self-critical and to accept without rancor the conclusions of such self-investigation, cultural maturity includes a good-natured willingness to try to learn from the past and to support the objectives for which it is worth while to acquire riches, rather than to be largely preoccupied with the means by which riches can be acquired.

By the definition of cultural maturity in such terms, can it be said that Southern California is culturally mature? Are the former Townsend Clubs, the once rampant Ham-and-Eggs pension plans, the much talked of Technocracy, Incorporated, the widely known religious cults, the long-tolerated real estate exploiters — are they all indications of cultural maturity? Is the treatment of Orientals and of Latin Americans, in their physical, cultural and religious segregation, a sign of cultural maturity? I know a U.C.L.A. History professor who was dispossessed of his Westwood house for no other reason but that he was Chinese. In our public primary and secondary school system, is the spending of vast sums of public money for much-needed buildings, and not nearly enough funds as yet for attracting very superior teachers, and enough of them, is *this* a sign of cultural maturity? What of local architecture with its watered-down, eclectic imitations of Old World styles ranging from Roman Pantheons through Gothic monasteries to Renaissance palaces and beyond—is the taste which builds such edifices mature? Is the fact that Los Angeles County spends much less per capita per year for its only publicly supported Museum than any other large American community a sign of cultural maturity? How mature is a culture which thinks so largely of how many people and many enterprises it can draw in from elsewhere, and until recently almost never of what kind of people and what kind of enterprises? Is it therefore surprising that like other much older large communities, we too have smog, fumes, and arteriosclerosis of our highways and streets?

But are we as immature culturally as we seem? I think that there are signs indicating, to those who can read them, that this region is veering in the direction of cultural maturity. These are to be found first of all in the quality of government which this region has begun to enjoy. If Lord Bryce were alive today and were to re-write his famous book *The American Commonwealth,* he would have to qualify his stinging assertion: "There is no denying," he said, "that the government of cities is the one conspicuous failure of the United States." Since 1888, when he first wrote that sentence, there have been a few bright spots. Among these, the present Mayor of Los Angeles and the five Supervisors of Los Angeles County are men of integrity and intelligence who are earnestly attacking the enormous problems which they have inherited as outgrowths of a rapidly expanding economy.

The second area in which this region is beginning to show cultural maturity is in its cultural institutions. As Director of the County Department of History, Science and Art, I can report to you that the five County Supervisors are supporting the development of a dynamic rather than a static Museum. With a firm and intelligent will to serve the best interests of the community, these men are responsible for your far-sighted County government.

Another reason for the public support which we at the Los Angeles County Museum are receiving is the fact that private museums in other parts of the country are so very superior. In America the private cultural institutions have set the standards which the public institutions have rarely been able to attain. This is nearly as true in the field of Colleges and universities as in museums. In our very midst no better illustration of this exists than the California Institute of Technology, whose graduates are in technological positions of high responsibility in many different countries, and whose faculty record of fundamental research is known on every continent. Some very competent

authorities have asserted that no publicly supported American engineering school has yet been able to surpass either the California or the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Or take as an example the four colleges in Claremont, in which all of you are so vitally interested. These institutions, along with Occidental College here in Los Angeles, are cultural islands where the emphasis is on attainment and close relations between faculty and students, and not on numbers and size. Their record down through the years amply justifies their faith in education for life, rather than in the equally important and necessarily specialized vocational and professional mass-education of the huge state universities. This year the total budget of the University of California, with its eight campuses, exceeds $44,000,000. A droll professor at Berkeley once remarked at an academic senate meeting that one of the differences between a large state university and the Shredded Wheat factory at Niagara Falls was that the latter openly admitted on every carton that its products had never been touched by human hands. Notwithstanding, California has the culturally most mature state university at Berkeley, and its youthful and rapidly growing Lombard Romanesque offshoot in Westwood promises to outdistance its parent in due time.

The work of only a few of the colleges and universities of this region has been mentioned. If time would permit, much should be told of the very valuable contributions of the many other institutions such as the University of Southern California, the largest private institution of learning in this area, and also the many smaller private colleges. The physical plants of the colleges and universities in Southern California can bear comparison with more than a few of the better private campuses along the north Atlantic seaboard. The quality of the research and teaching is constantly setting new local standards, as young scholars of promise and established learned men are drawn increasingly to this area. Some day the region of Southern California may seriously rival New England in the field of higher education.

How mature are we in the matter of library facilities? Judged by the number of books per capita which are at present available, we cannot hold our heads high. The City and the County Libraries, with their many branches, have nevertheless not been able to keep their services abreast of the increase in the population, and many of their books reflect the poor literary taste of a large proportion of their users. This raises the question as to how far a public cultural institution should go in attempting to improve the cultural standards of those whom they serve. Do not museums and libraries have similar obligations in this matter?

The University of California Library in Westwood is among the fastest growing university libraries in America. Having attained some breadth, it is now seeking to secure depth. In these times, anyone who has bought books wisely and in quantity knows that this requires much money and many competent scholars, with both of which the University of California is liberally endowed. It is refreshing to note that when the University of California Library buys books with public funds it is entirely free to judge the fairness of prices and to purchase whatever it wants and from any source with which the United States has unrestricted economic relations.

In its specialized research libraries Southern California should take considerable pride. In the Clark Library, which is under the administration of the University of California, specialists in seventeenth century English literature have a very superior research tool. The Elmer Belt Library of materials pertaining to Leonardo da Vinci is already the finest private American collection of the kind and is well along toward becoming a scholars' library for the study of the Italian Renaissance. It is hardly necessary to mention the Huntington research library, known to scholars throughout the world. While its major

period of growth coincided with the last years of the life of its founder, it is continuously buying materials necessary for keeping it up to date with significant developments in the scholarly fields represented by its collections. Finally, you as a group have a right to be very proud of the Claremont College Library, which is so very outstanding in the field of the Far East and in material on the water problem of the Southwestern United States.

In the realm of music, Southern California now looms importantly on the national scene. Through the energy and foresight of certain leading private citizens, grand opera of the highest standard will have its own magnificent, significant auditorium not far from where we are meeting this evening. Also, the Civic Light Opera is entering its eleventh season. As in the past, it is holding its traditional general auditions, endeavoring to select for the choruses gifted young people whose character, appearance and ability hold a promise of eventual attainment of leading roles. The standards of this organization bear favorable comparison with those of any other similar group of high reputation.

The Los Angeles Symphony orchestra has attained an honorable position. By its Saturday morning "Symphonies for Youth" and by playing many concerts in smaller outlying communities, it is creating a higher level of musical taste and understanding in this region.

Hollywood Bowl is known throughout this country as the scene of very fine musical performances. Its season of concerts "under the stars" brings gifted musicians from distant parts of the world to play before the people of this community. Thus, through the facilities of two outstanding organizations, music of the first order can be heard almost throughout the year, during the winter in Philharmonic Auditorium, during the summer at Hollywood Bowl.

In numerous other places in this region small chamber music series are springing up; we concluded recently the second annual such series at the Los Angeles County Museum. They are part of the decentralization of music now occurring here.

What can be said about the quality of the legitimate drama in this community? The number of downtown theaters available for plays is very small. Thirty years ago the little theater movement gained a firm foothold with the establishment of the now nationally recognized Pasadena Playhouse. In subsequent years, and especially during the past decade, numerous little legitimate theaters have sprung up in different geographical sections round about us. They have drawn upon two sources for their actors and their technical staffs: the large group of talented amateurs living here, and the enormous concentration of professionals attracted here by the Motion Picture Industry. Many of the latter have found much-needed relief in acting in little theaters, either after studio hours or inbetween motion picture engagements. Recently, occasional little theater plays which make their début here have been so high in calibre that they are taken to New York. The little theater movement here has been mature almost from the start, in contrast to the Motion Picture Industry, part of whose present difficulty stems from its underestimate of the maturity of the American people.

The annual Pilgrimage Play, which is produced each July at the Pilgrimage Bowl, has become a local tradition. Treating the life of Christ, it is the only local, publicly subsidized drama of a religious character. The play is set against a background of hills parched by the burning mid-summer sun which resembles the scenery of the highland ridge of central Palestine.

It might be appropriate to ask what the museums of Southern California are doing in the direction of cultural maturity. Here again the private museums are taking much of the initiative. The modest Santa Barbara Natural History Museum is a model institu-

tion. I wish there were more time to dwell on the merits of its small habitat groups and of its mineral collection.

The Santa Barbara Art Museum is making Santa Barbara quietly but firmly aware of significant developments in the art of our time and the decades immediately preceding. Up to the present no artist-pickets have appeared on that museum's front steps, nor have any Santa Barbara artists publicly declared that creative contemporary art is undemocratic or even subversive.

To the south of us, down in San Diego, the Fine Arts Gallery has built a collection of European paintings, ranging from 1300 to 1870, which sets the highest standard on the Pacific Coast. More than $2,000,000 from private sources has made this possible. The gallery itself has been entirely renovated since its conversion for war purposes, and the collection is now shown again in the very pleasant surroundings of Balboa Park. The San Diego Museum of Man, also in Balboa Park, is being prepared for its postwar re-opening on April 17th.

Here in Los Angeles there are two well-known private museums. The Southwest Museum, in Highland Park, is generally acknowledged to be the center of research into and exhibits of the life and remains of the American Indian cultures of this part of the world. This splendid institution has never received any public money and has never charged admission. Its publications of its researches in the field have played a leading part in revealing the prehistory of man in this region.

The justly famous Huntington Art Gallery, in San Marino, is largely devoted to eighteenth century English art, and constitutes one of the greatest of such collections outside of England. The Pasadena Art Institute holds temporary loan exhibits of art of all epochs. During the past twelve months, with the aid of an enthusiastic Junior League group, it has initiated a lively creative art program for children.

Within the past two months the Modern Institute of Art in Beverly Hills has come into being and has opened its doors for the first time with a superlative loan exhibition borrowed mainly from local collectors and illustrating significant stages of the past half century of French art. This new small, privately supported museum gives promise of becoming a focal point for many who sincerely love or seriously wish to learn more about the best artistic expressions of recent decades and of today. We at the Los Angeles County Museum welcome this new arrival. A community of this size should support several museums. New York has twelve; San Francisco has three.

Among the most recent important local institutions is the Olive Hill Foundation. This organization exists to afford wider understanding of the best in the history of art and culture. Its still incompleted headquarters on Olive Hill are now partially open for public use. In collaboration with scholars at nearby and far distant institutions, the Foundation proposes to inquire into the nature and driving forces of culture today, and to compare these with the culture of earlier periods such as that of the Renaissance. It hopes to throw light by the analysis of culture on how the different branches of our mind really operate.

During the past year and three-quarters the Los Angeles County Museum has been making strides. In the course of this period it has received private cash donations from leading citizens for the purchase of works of art, the total sum of which is twenty-six times more than the Museum has had from all private sources in the previous thirty-six years of its entire existence. This is a very auspicious start toward the financial position and resources of established Eastern museums. The late Andrew Mellon gave fifty million dollars to

establish the present National Gallery in Washington, D. C. The Metropolitan Museum in New York has an endowment alone of $45,000,000, and collections worth even more than this. The collections of the Los Angeles County Museum have also been enriched by private citizens during this same recent period through their gifts of works of art valued at not less than $300,000. But our Museum, unlike the large Eastern institutions, does not have any endowment.

With the cash donations and the gifts of works of art we have assembled for the first time in this region a permanent art collection presenting a glimpse of the five thousand-year course of civilization. Using different wall colors and various kinds of effective lighting, we have brought together the significant or typical artistic media of each distinct culture or period. We are developing plans for a general American History Hall to match the recently opened California History Hall with its diorama models interspersed among original historical materials.

In Natural Science we shall soon be opening an entirely new Southern California Bird Hall, replacing the old one, and exemplifying the best contemporary exhibition techniques. We are now proceeding with the development of the Rancho La Brea in Hancock Park. This entire area will be landscaped and much of it planted with modern survivals of Pleistocene flora, and will be transformed into a partially living exhibit of life which vanished for the most part from this region some fifty thousand years ago.

This coming summer we hope to be well launched into the new Hall of Evolving Life, which will pioneer in attempting to show in one series of displays all of the chief sources of evidence of life on the earth. In telling the full story it will draw upon Biology, Palaeontology and also modern survival of earlier forms of life.

In its new services the Museum has broken virgin soil. The documentary film series, world-wide in scope, has brought a new kind of visitor who seeks enlightenment rather than entertainment. The Sunday afternoon lectures and chamber music concerts have reached a public which would have no other means of securing similar opportunities elsewhere. The gallery talks to adults and to classes from the schools have given new meaning to the collections, and wider understanding of the value of a museum. Our Museum instructors spoke last year to more than 31,000 children in organized classes who came to the Museum for special gallery talks directly related to what they were studying in school. Demands for this service far exceed what the Museum can furnish at this time with its present staff.

In short, the Museum has come very much alive. But we do not pretend that the quality of our art collections can compare as yet with those of the established older institutions. We know that our cultural maturity cannot be legislated and that it must come from within society itself. We are aware that maturity is also founded on the comprehension that the enduring values of civilization are beyond economics, and lie in the realm of man's spirit and its relation to the physical facts and spiritual values of the universe. Maturity is more than tolerance, more than understanding, more than altruism. To this island in the land which is Southern California have come people of widely differing habits, environment and race. For many of these newcomers, their loyalties and their sources of income are still elsewhere. So many of them have brought their way of life from afar, that only a bare beginning has been made toward the creation of cultural integration. This integration is now starting in the arts. How long did it take England to absorb the invading Normans of the eleventh century? England did not become homogeneous for a considerable period thereafter. That was one invasion. And Southern California has been under continuous invasion for the past hundred or more years.

The future lies in our own hands. Those of us whose memory holds the tragedy of two world wars have watched in both the Nazi and Communist systems the decline of what the liberals and humanists have considered to be the essential values in society—combined with so great a concentration on material ends that, as Professor Butterfield of Cambridge University puts it, "Over a great deal of Europe the new Dark Ages may be said not to be merely threatening, for indeed they have already begun. And though this need not make us despair for the human race, since the Dark Ages, though they may be long, are by the nature of things an interim affair—a matter of hope as well as gloom if they represent the kind of retreat that may lead to a better start—still, all men must be apprehensive; and if the darkness deepens many will feel that the tragedy is doubled from the very fact that the scientific and industrial era had come so near to making a fine thing of the world.

"It would not come amiss if people would ask themselves what are the things that can be carried over when even that structure which we call 'civilization' has come crashing down upon our heads; for at worst we shall not all die, and the human race even in its present state of willfulness can hardly entirely exterminate itself; . . . and it is not permitted us to . . . judge that . . . human life will never pick up again . . . It is not those who see only the present and work for immediate returns . . . who will show the way of salvation in an age which is heavy with the greatest catastrophes . . . We are in the presence of a great piece of history-making and we do not any of us know where it is taking us. This universe always was a risky place to live in . . ."

It would be flying in the face of Providence to demand too great security for the future. With security we might fall too easily into unrealistic optimism; without it we might fall prey to cataclysmic pessimism. There is a middle course, perhaps best stated once by Bernard Shaw when he wrote: "People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are . . . The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can't find them, make them," he said. You are such people, many of you responsible for the advance of cultural institutions, quite a number of which we have passed in review this evening. It should now be increasingly clear that, despite the severe criticism leveled at certain aspects of Southern California life by some older American communities, this island in the land has already attained a fair measure of cultural maturity. Its libraries, its colleges, its universities, its orchestras, its legitimate stage, and its museums already present a rich harvest for the minds and hearts of all who hunger for this kind of nourishment. With your good-will, all these institutions will go forward to worthy objectives, as they face the future and the brilliant Pacific sun.

NICOLAS POUSSIN (1594-1665)—*Inspiration*
(Detail, from the painting in The Louvre)

VISIONARY ART

An address by William R. Valentiner, Director Consultant of the Museum, to the Friends of the Colleges at Claremont. Given at the California Club, Los Angeles, on March 30, 1948.

There are some who think that we museum people have a wonderful time of it, being surrounded by art every minute of the day, and on top of that, being shown works of art in a constant stream by people who bring them in for consideration. Unfortunately, only a very small portion of what is shown us has to do with art. As art is something visible and connected with practical life, the boundaries between what is art and what is not, are not as clear as in the case of music or poetry. If one wants to hear good music, he goes to a concert; if one wants to enjoy poetry, he looks for it in volumes by great poets, or upon the stage. No one who is not musical, no one who is unreceptive of poetry, would enter the holy precincts reserved for these forms of expression. But when it comes to art, people think it is everywhere—in the streets, the houses, on the walls, the floor, the ceiling: there are rugs, furniture, photographs, and all of it is called art, and everyone thinks he knows all about it, or if he doesn't, that a few visits to a museum or some exhibitions will teach it to him overnight.

It is not so much a matter of knowledge that is needed, as an inborn ability to give oneself up completely to the will of the artist when he expresses a deep experience of life. All of us carry in us a longing to free ourselves, at times, from our own self and anguish, and to forget our existence in exaltation. But this desire for exaltation is directed towards different goals according to the different capacities of our nature. Some are captured by the spectacle of sports, others by the expression of patriotism, others by the varieties of religious experience, and perhaps not too many by art. Nobody can be stirred up in the same measure by all these incentives. Some people become exalted only in mass performances, sport events or church services, for instance; others only in privacy. We can gauge the different varieties of enthusiasm which exist if we observe what happens next door to our Museum where every Sunday there is a football game or a midget auto race. Hundreds of thousands are excited in the coliseum by the feats of sports performers, and express their satisfaction by a noise that resembles the roaring of lions and can be heard in the Museum itself. Perhaps at that very time, a few are standing in the Museum before a masterpiece, and likewise receiving emotional stimulation, but separately, without connection with the crowd, yet with enjoyment not the less intense because quiet. If you are carried away by a great work of art it will hardly be in the company of others, which is the reason that sensitive people prefer to go through a museum alone. The number of those who enjoy art is comparatively small, as most people are devoted to mass enjoyment. But those who created the masterpieces were also individualists, and in the creation of culture, the numbers count less than the individual.

But what is a measure for perceiving great art? When you attend a concert you are not satisfied if the orchestra merely plays well together, or if you recognize a theme here and there. You want to be carried away by the emotional impact of the composer and conductor. You want to be moved and elevated into higher spheres, which make you forget or transcend reality. If you go to the theater, you will not think the evening rewarding if you witness a production which merely reproduces the experiences of everyday existence. The effect should be rather as a soldier wrote to Katherine Cornell—I read it the other day in TIME Magazine—"I was transported from the atmosphere of war for moments into another world."

When you view a painting, it is not sufficient if you recognize a piece of scenery you know or remember from photographs, or the portrait of someone familiar to you. You must be stirred to your deepest emotions, as you are by poetry and music. Otherwise, you have failed to grasp the meaning of art. How great art can affect one was conveyed to me the other day when a well-known writer told me the impression created upon him by our recent Rembrandt exhibition. He said, "Some of the paintings I did not understand, but there were four or five which seemed to me to have been created in a world outside our own. I could not believe they were made by a human hand." When I asked what paintings he referred to, he mentioned *King David Praying* over his consoling harp; the young *Titus,* in whose strange, flickering eyes can be seen the premonition of early death; and *Simeon Holding the Christ Child,* as he feels that the light of the newly born will continue his own life. I noticed that all these works were eminently visionary in content; and indeed, these are the ones which produce the deepest emotions. All great art is the result of great visions. If we are transported by it, it is because the artist has an insight beyond reality into a world of deeper meaning, and forms a bridge for us through this work, between earth and heaven. This can be easily proved with examples of great art from the past. Let us look for a moment at architecture, selecting constructions from three different epochs: the Pyramids, the Gothic cathedrals, and the modern skyscrapers. On the horizon of man's earliest history loom the Pyramids of Egypt, works created in moments of great vision and unsurpassed in grand conception and magic power. Their builders appreciated the surprising effect created by simple geometric forms seen on vast plains against a limitless sky. They connected earth and sky through constructions which were solidly based on the ground, but whose outlines pointed in rapidly narrowing angles towards heaven. In later epochs, many buildings of similar height were created, but in cities, surrounded by other buildings, they lost their impression of isolated stature. To the early Egyptians who had never seen anything even remotely approaching their height, the Pyramids seemed indeed, as they said, "As high as the heavens." They called the Pyramid of Khufu "Akkat Khufu," which means "Horizon of Khufu," the place from which the dead King "ascends heavenward like the morning sun over the eastern mountains."

The Gothic cathedrals are also turned heavenwards, with their towers, turrets, and soaring lines which point sharper and move faster than those of the Pyramids. They pierce the sky with an infinite number of arrows, out of which the front towers shoot up like two spearheads. But it is not the exterior alone which demonstrates the yearning of men to reach into the world beyond; for the first time in history, the awareness of infinite space is created within a building. The walls become transparent with glass, the ceiling opens and shafts of penetrating light radiate skywards, carrying us with them to the glory of God, enthroned in heaven.

It took centuries before a new form of tall structure was produced, the skyscraper, which, as its name implies, seeks to scratch the surface of the sky, not with the sharp points of a cathedral tower, but with a smooth surface, like the blade of a shining knife (I am thinking of the last and most beautiful form, Rockefeller center). If the arrow-like, vertical point on the top is now missing, the reason is that we have relinquished the belief in heaven as an exact locus above us, but have learned to find it in the vast spaces around the earth in all directions, vertical as well as horizontal. For this new conception, the construction of the airplanes is perhaps even more characteristic than the tall buildings. They are the new mobile architecture, loosened from their base, to which architecture had been bound—no longer pointing to one direction merely, but penetrating space from all sides, and pursuing ends which in former times were possible only in dreams. We all know that the construction of these great wings, which rise

like birds into the sky, would not have been possible without the visions of those who conceived them, from Leonardo da Vinci to the Wright Brothers, visions which gave these men courage to create realities out of thought.

The vision which produced the fundamental forms in architecture, extended to masterpieces of painting as well. We do not need to speak of the height of mediaeval art where every representation is a visionary character: in immense shadowy images of Christ, the Virgin and Saints in the mosaics and murals of Byzantine and Romanesque churches, or the miniatures illustrating the Apocalypse, or prophets—those holy compositions which never deal with earthly subjects, but only with extra-terrestrial phenomena like heaven and hell, soon also the dominant concerns of Dante's visions. But let us recall the better known paintings of the Renaissance and Baroque, the so-called realistic ages to which people refer for their canons when they attack contemporary painters as fantastic, or when they demand an art of uninspired reproduction of nature. Take, for instance, the *Assunta* of Titian, Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling, the CRUCIFIXION or EMMAUS representations by Rembrandt. Are they not all born out of a highly fantastic and prophetic mind, and was not art, for all these masters, identical with religion? Vision is the basic, mutual element of both art and religion, because both transfigure images of nature into symbols of highly spiritual significance.

Although great art is always visionary, the artist's conception of the world changes with every new experience of scientific character in man's history. As we have seen in the development of architecture, it was a fundamentally new experience for men to learn that the earth was round and in motion, that it was not flat and surmounted with a sky the shape of a glass cover through which stars peep, as was the belief in Egyptian times and still current in the Middle Ages. After man had become aware that the earth was a small body in the vast solar system, and that the sun was itself a star in the Milky Way, it was impossible to support the belief that man was the center of the creation to which he had elevated himself in earlier epochs and, most of all, at the end of these epochs, that is, during the Renaissance.

In Michelangelo's creations man is superior to anything in nature. His bodies fill the world with superb movements and gestures, a kingly race. Nothing exists outside of these nude, heroic figures. There are no flowers, no gardens, forests, oceans, clouds, stars in his world. There is even no space save that which is closest to you in his paintings. His was an illusion which could not last long. It was Michelangelo's tragedy that he believed in the world of men which he intended naively to direct towards God. At the end of his life, Galileo was punished by the inquisition because he dared to assert that the earth was revolving about the sun. The Church tried to hold onto the mediaeval belief, which was indeed a happy one, and it took three hundred years before humanity became reconciled to Galileo's scientific fact and until it entered man's consciousness and influenced his practical life. In art we can follow the course whereby man, in the centuries following the Renaissance, was slowly pushed out of the center of the world and overpowered by the elements of nature. If we compare the 16th century art of Michelangelo, with the 17th century art of Rembrandt or the late 18th century art of Turner, we note that nature occupies a much greater space and more powerful position. Light and dark engulf man and brown his efforts. In the *Three Crosses* of Rembrandt, rain, storm and lightning overwhelm the masses of individual figures and scatter them like leaves in the wind under the Cross, which alone stands erect, but is bathed in heavenly light. Whole epochs in modern times, such as those of the impressionists, are occupied with studying the atmosphere and light which envelops figures and connects them with the cosmos, while in contemporary art some courageous painters omit the human

figure entirely as unimportant in the world scheme, and seek to represent, instead, the waves, atoms, rays, which compose the nature of the elements.

If you would understand contemporary art, you have first of all to follow the vision of our time. This vision is different from that of former centuries, because our knowledge is different: the airplane has allowed us to see heaven and earth from different angles. Photography has made it possible to reproduce it on a flat surface. Those who are fond of flying will easily understand that the little, peep-show perspective of traditional painting is of no avail today, when we are occupied with problems of the micro- and macrocosmos, of atoms, electrons, neutrons and protons. Space can no longer be depicted from the static, narrow standpoint of the spectator who sees only in one direction, like the painter of former generations. People tell the artist: "You cannot paint the universe, the infinity of space, you cannot even paint the stars." And the artist replies: "Oh yes, I can. As our imagination has no limits, we can produce worlds of immense proportions on the smallest canvas, adding to it all the joy we encounter in recognizing their eternal laws." Van Gogh painted the starry night in an unforgettable work, which gives us not only the sensation of the brilliancy of distant lights, but also the swirling motion of their rotation in all its scintillation.

No one, however, demands that all artists should paint only subjects in which are embodied the leading ideas of the present or future. But whatever their tendency, whatever the school to which they belong, since a new vision has been molded in our time, we may rightly expect them to arouse in us the same reaction which we receive from the visionary art of the past. If the artists cannot and wish not to paint stars, they should at least transmit through their work something of that universal feeling which we receive from these celestial bodies when we cast our gaze up to them in the night.

On the other hand, the artist is justified in expecting the beholder to follow his flight with a receptive and sensitive mind. And here we should remember that the artist, more than the musician or poet, works under great handicaps which produce greater obstacles between the appreciation of his art and the spectator. The element of time, which permits the musician and poet to create a gradual rise to a climax, as in Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* or Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, or Goethe's *Faust*, is not the prerogative of the painter. In these musical and literary works, even uninitiated people are slowly lifted out of the atmosphere of the prosaic, everyday-existence into realms where visions hold sway. The artist cannot work this way. His visual creation is surrounded on every side by objects alien to it. It takes an enormous concentration to pull the spectator into his sphere and hold him there, undistracted by the outside elements. The force and intensity which produced the work must be overpowering in the very moment of perception. In one second the artist tears you out of reality, carrying you into his world. He has to give you all he has at once, because your eye takes in the whole with a single glance. If you stand under the towers of a cathedral or Rockefeller Center, you are carried up in seconds from the ground to the highest spire, from the first to the seventieth floor. The heavy stone walls lightly soar into the air: the lines shoot up before you like rockets. It is the same with great paintings. Michaelangelo and Van Gogh summon a world out of nothingness before our eyes in the very moment of apprehending it: it is like flames breaking out in the darkness of night, and we feel the shock of the spectacle in all our nerves. The will drive of the creative artist is enormous; small wonder that it has driven some of the greatest insane.

And not even every spectator can stand this explosive process of the creation of a new world out of chaos. One has to be strong to bear the shock. But it will reward you if you can. It may be "The shock of recognition,"—the realization of your innermost

wishes, the shock which may transport you into that world for which you are longing, which is intimated to you through your imagination, and which you often do not believe possible of actualization.

If the Indian philosophers are right in saying that the aim of life is to realize fully that part of our nature which is divine, great art points the way in that direction, since it cannot be conceived without divine afflatus, without the purest instinct in man. If we see through the artist's eyes, fear, which lurks ever behind us in one form or another, is vanquished. This is the difference between looking at the most startling work of visionary art and witnessing an explosion in nature, be it meteoric or volcanic explosion of the most dynamic dimensions. Confronting the vastness of space and the forces of nature, which remain titanic and mysterious regardless of our so-called "Conquest of nature," we cannot avoid being cowed, if not frightened, by our own minuteness in comparison. But the artist, being human, measures with our measure, even when he speaks of the universe and eternity.

At night we see the stars, but not the flowers of the day, although we know they are there. In the daylight, we do not see the stars of the night, although we know they are there. Similarly, the artist sustains our awareness of a world behind the one we see, a world of equal beauty, perhaps even greater because it is a world of dreams, of wishes, and of visions.

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